Public hearing set for Tuesday, July 25

A public hearing will be held Tuesday, July 25, 2006, at the Turtle Lake Public School gymnasium, 205 Oak Street North in Turtle Lake.

- 4:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. - Attendees can review exhibits and the DEIS.
- 4:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. - Court reporters available to record *private* oral testimony from individuals wishing to express their views. Written comments are also welcome.
- 6:00 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. - Short presentation on US 8 project and hearing process.
- 6:15 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. (or later) - Attendees can publicly voice their comments.

In addition to these opportunities, interested individuals may also send comments to be included in the hearing record to the WisDOT NW Region office. Written comments on the DEIS will be accepted through August 11, 2006. "This hearing is a formal opportunity for individuals to express their opinions regarding the US 8 improvement options," states Dena Grumdahl, WisDOT project manager. Responses obtained at this hearing will help determine the preferred alternative. Dena Grumdahl adds, "The selection of a preferred alternative, however, will not be made until all of the public and agency comments are evaluated and any suggested modifications fully considered."

Copies of Draft EIS available

Printed Copy - $80

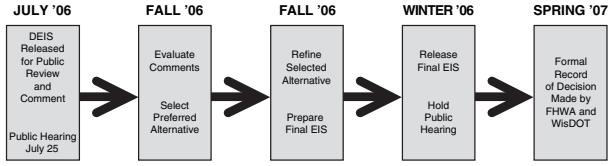
Electronic Copy (on CD) - $5

Contact: Joan Petersen
Strand Associates, Inc.
910 W. Wingra Drive
Madison, WI 53715
(866) 300-5446 (toll-free)
joan.petersen@strand.com

Via Internet - Free
June - Executive Summary
July - Full DEIS
http://www.dot.state.wi.us/projects/d8/eis/index.htm

Next steps in the project development process

While the public hearing for the US 8 DEIS marks an important milestone in the project development process, there are still activities remaining to complete Tier 1. The adjacent figure details the next steps and anticipated schedule.



Inside: Summary of Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Public hearing set for July 25

Strand Associates, Inc.
910 W. Wingra Drive
Madison, WI 53715

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
MADISON WI
PERMIT #2783

US 8

US 8 Environmental Impact Statement

JUNE 2006

WisDOT Northwest Region Newsletter No. 8

In this issue:

To contact us:

Dena Grumdahl
WisDOT-NW Region
1701 North 4th Street
Superior, WI 54880
(800) 590-1868
dena.grumdahl@dot.state.wi.us

Joan Petersen, P.E.
Strand Associates, Inc.
910 W. Wingra Drive
Madison, WI 53715
(866) 300-5446 (toll-free)
joan.petersen@strand.com

If you have any questions or concerns about this project, contact either of the above project representatives.

Learn more about the US 8 EIS at:
http://www.dot.state.wi.us/projects/d8/eis/index.htm

US 8 Draft Environmental Impact Statement available for review

After several years of analysis, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for US 8 improvements in Polk and Barron counties is available for public review. "This document provides a decision making tool for everyone evaluating the impacts of possible US 8 improvements," explains Dena Grumdahl, project manager for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. "The document carefully describes the purpose and need for possible improvements, the variety of alternatives investigated to address the project need, and the impacts associated with those alternatives."

An important aspect of the DEIS is its designation as a "Tier 1" environmental document. The goal of Tier 1 is to gain consensus on the basic location and design vision for the 40-mile US 8 corridor between WIS 35 (N) and US 53. Future phases, called Tier 2 and Tier 3, will be used to provide detailed engineering for corridor preservation efforts and eventual design and construction. Dena Grumdahl stated, "The Tier 1 DEIS evaluates not only the effects to the natural resources of the corridor, but also the impacts to the business and residential communities. These analyses provide information needed to make an informed decision regarding alternative/corridor selection. The Tier 1 decision for the future location and design vision of US 8 forms the foundation for WisDOT's approach to funding and scheduling the highest-need sections of US 8 improvements."

This newsletter provides a summary of the more than 600-page DEIS. Individuals desiring more detailed information may review the entire DEIS at the following locations: corridor area libraries, administrative offices of local cities, villages, towns, and Polk and Barron Counties and highway departments. Copies are also at the Regional Planning Commission office in Eau Claire and the WisDOT offices in Superior and Eau Claire. Individual copies of the DEIS may also be obtained though there is a charge to offset printing costs; see the last page of this newsletter for details. The DEIS will be online in July at http://www.dot.state.wi.us/projects/d8/eis/index.htm.

US 8 Public Hearing
Tuesday, July 25, 2006

Open House Format - 4:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Formal Hearing Convenes at 6:00 p.m.

Turtle Lake Public School
205 Oak Street North, Turtle Lake, Wisconsin

US 8 Draft Environmental Impact Statement summary

1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The US 8 corridor evaluated begins at WIS 35 (N) in Polk County and extends approximately 40 miles to US 53 in Barron County, Wisconsin. Within the project limits, the corridor passes through the communities of Range and Poskin (unincorporated), villages of Turtle Lake and Almena, and City of Barron. The corridor passes through the towns of St. Croix Falls, Balsam Lake, Apple River, Beaver, Almena, Clinton, Barron, and Stanley. Figure 1 shows the location of the project.

US 8 is designated as a rural principal arterial highway, serving traffic movements that are interstate, statewide or interregional in nature. Primarily a two-lane highway, US 8 has a four-lane section within the Village of Turtle Lake and the City of Barron. US 8 forms a distinct area for the corridor study as local and regional traffic patterns change beyond each of the project termini where US 8 connects to multilane highways. The US 8 corridor is of sufficient length to address environmental issues on a broad basis.

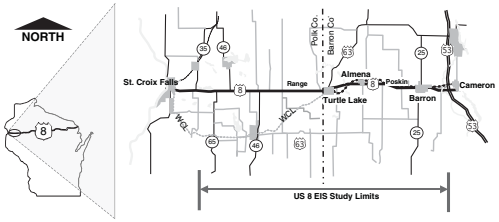


Figure 1 - Project Location Map

2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED OF PROPOSED PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to identify the preferred corridor for eventual construction of a multilane facility meeting future transportation and safety needs for US 8. A preferred alternative that satisfies the project purpose and need will then be preserved until proposed long-range improvements are warranted. To satisfy the purpose of this project, the future US 8 improvement alternative should create a transportation system that complements and supports planned land uses and transportation systems and preserves highway mobility on the corridor. The transportation corridor must be consistent with the national, state, regional, and local importance of US 8 and avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. A tiered approach is used to provide identification of a preferred corridor and the transportation solutions to address both immediate and long-term needs.

- Tier 1 is the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The document is used to gain consensus on the basic location and design vision for the overall corridor. Tier 1 is not intended to provide detailed engineering to a level that identifies the new corridor centerline, or right-of-way limits, or high-accuracy construction cost estimates.
- Tier 2 (future) would include formal corridor preservation efforts for portions on existing alignment and portions located on new alignment.
- Tier 3 (future) would include efforts to advance the proposed corridor design engineering to a level necessary for enumeration for construction as a Major highway project or inclusion into another State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Tier 3 efforts could involve any one or a number of corridor segments depending on conditions and available funding.
- Tiers 2 or 3 would include additional environmental documentation in the form of second tier Environmental Impact Statements or Environmental Assessments, depending on the location and extent of the corridor segment improvement.
- The ultimate completion of 40 miles of a multilane facility will require some major highway project enumeration and will likely take decades to fund and complete.

The US 8 project is needed because:

- **US 8 is a route of national, state, regional, and local importance.** US 8 is included in the National Highway System (NHS) and is designated as a Connector Route in the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) Corridors 2020 plan.
- **Long-term planning and corridor preservation are needed.** The growth of adjacent communities has, and will continue to place both additional traffic and demand on the US 8 corridor. It is essential that long-term planning and corridor preservation for the US 8 corridor occur in advance of these demands.
- **Future traffic volumes indicate a need for additional capacity.** Current traffic volumes on US 8 in the rural areas range from 6,370 to 10,950 average daily traffic (ADT). Projected traffic volumes in the year 2030 are expected to range from 9,900 to 14,800 ADT for these same areas. The overall quality of traffic flow along a segment of roadway is described by "Level of Service" (LOS). The levels range from very good, represented by LOS A, to very poor, represented by LOS F. WisDOT policy indicates that a rural two-lane roadway will generally fail to meet the required LOS C for a Corridors 2020 Connector route when traffic volumes reach approximately 8,700 ADT. When LOS C is desired, the 8,700 ADT is considered the threshold when the roadway needs capacity improvements. WisDOT can accept a lower LOS when the use of passing lanes is found to be an adequate treatment for the facility. When a reduced LOS is acceptable and passing lanes are used, the threshold to consider changing from a rural two-lane to four-lane facility can be increased to approximately 12,000 ADT.
- **Improvements are needed to correct substandard roadway items.** Substandard roadway items along US 8 include curves that do not provide adequate stopping sight distance or are too steeply banked, and substandard shoulder width in one segment.
- **Crash rates are high in urban areas.** From 1996–2000 crashes were above the statewide urban average in two of the five years in the Village of Turtle Lake. In the City of Barron, crashes were above the statewide urban average in four of the five years.
- **Legislative mandate and public input.** The State Legislature enumerated funds for a US 8 study in 2001. A corridor study of this scale requires an EIS. The mandate for the corridor study was a result of input by the US 8 Coalition, a group of county and local officials formed in the mid-1990s to communicate concerns about safety and congestion along the corridor. Public support has been high for improvements that address congestion, safe access to and from US 8, and mobility for both local and regional traffic.

[1] By statute, a "major highway project" denotes a project that has a total cost over $5 million and involves any of the following: constructing a new highway 2.5 miles or more in length; reconstructing or reconditioning an existing highway by either relocating 2.5 miles or more of the existing highway, adding one or more lanes five miles or more in length to the existing highway, or improving to freeway standards 10 miles or more of existing divided highway having two or more lanes in either direction.

TABLE 3 US 8 CORRIDOR IMPACTS SUMMARY

Segment	Limits	Alternative	Segment Length miles	Total Corridor Wetland acres	Agricultural Land acres	Historical Sites	Arch Sites	Relocations		Estimated Construction Costs *
								Businesses	Residences	
I	200th Street to 120th Street	Deer Lake On-Alignment	7.9	46.4	91.7	Deer Lake School Avoided	None	13	26	$ 20,970,000
		Deer Lake Southern Realignment	8	39.6	134.1	Deer Lake School Avoided	None	4	21	$ 20,160,000
		Deer Lake Far Southern Realignment	8.2	50.2	120.2	Deer Lake School Avoided	None	4	19	$ 21,630,000
II	120th Street to County E	Apple River/Clover Lake On-Alignment	4.0	8.4	36.4	None	None	6	14	$ 14,680,000
III	County E to 50th Street	Range On-Alignment	3.2	6.7	29.0	None	None	3	21	$ 7,490,000
		Range Northern Realignment	3.3	9.6	30.0	None	None	1	6	$ 8,670,000
		Range Southern Realignment	3.3	4.9	87.6	None	None	0	5	$ 6,250,000
IV	50th St. to 15th St.	Joel Flowage On-Alignment	3.5	15.5	40.9	None	None	2	8	$ 5,170,000
		Joel Flowage Northern Realignment	3.6	11.4	58.9	None	None	1	6	$ 6,170,000
V	15th St. to 5th St.	Turtle Lake Alt 1 (Short South Bypass)	8.1	26.7	352.8	None	3Sites (UE)	0	11	$ 27,390,000
		Turtle Lake Alt 2 (Long South Bypass)	7.6	43.7	327.0	None	1 Site (UE)	0	7	$ 28,440,000
		Turtle Lake Alt 3 (North Bypass)	7.6	30.8	150.8	None	3Sites (UE)	1	11	$ 23,570,000
		Turtle Lake Alt 4 (Through-Town)	6.8	3.9	77.3	None	3Sites (UE)	1	8	$ 14,830,000
VI	5th St. to Sweeny Pond Creek	Poskin On-Alignment	5.8	23.6	52.7	None	None	19	24	$ 13,330,000
		Poskin Southern Realignment	5.8	23.7	105.0	None	None	14	10	$ 16,190,000
VII	Sweeny Pond to US 53	Barron Alt A (Short South Bypass)	8.5	28.4	345.1	None	None	3	10	$ 34,990,000
		Barron Alt B (Long South Bypass)	8.5	38.7	405.3	1 Historic Building Avoided	None	3	11	$ 36,610,000
		Barron Alt C (North Bypass)	9.7	40.4	524.5	None	None	1	7	$ 44,280,000
		Barron Alt D (Through-Town)	8.4	9.1	58.1	2 Historic Buildings Avoided and 1 Historic Building Impacted	None	17	44	$ 24,310,000

* Costs include roadway and structures construction, 10% engineering and contingency, and jurisdictional transfer costs.
UE–Unevaluated, Phase 2 investigation needed if preferred alternative would affect site.

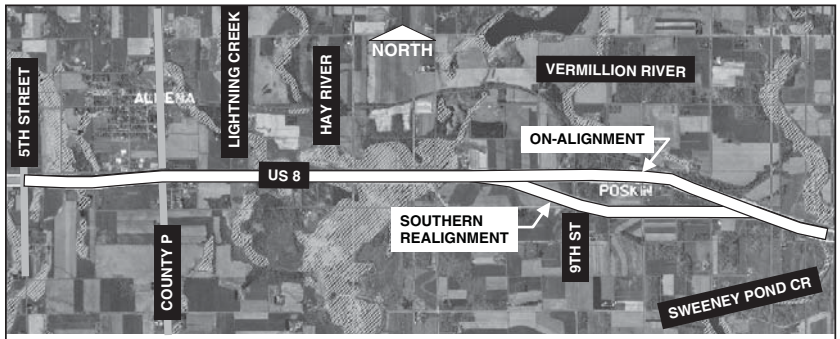


Figure 8, Segment VI - 5th Street to Sweeny Pond Creek

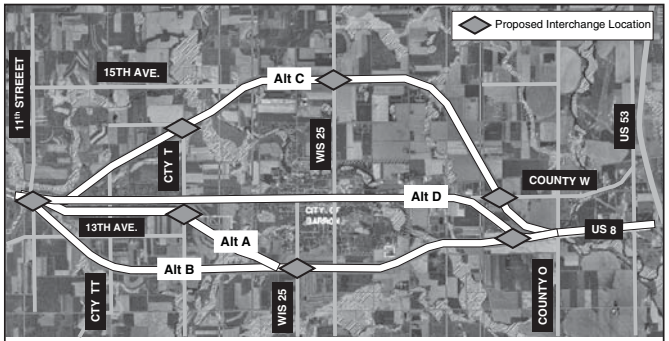


Figure 9, Segment VII - Sweeny Pond Creek to US 53

4.0 PRELIMINARY WISDOT-RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE

Currently, no preferred alternative has been selected. The overall corridor preferred alternative will be a combination of preferred alternative in each of the seven segments. The DEIS provides an assessment of the alternatives and it is intended to assist decision-makers with selecting a preferred alternative. After agency and public comment and testimony regarding the DEIS are considered, a preferred alternative will be presented in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

The DEIS includes a preliminary WisDOT-recommended alternative to provide the public and agencies with a sense of WisDOT's recommended vision for the corridor and to garner feedback during the review process. WisDOT's preliminary recommendations are shown in Table 2.

5.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT - SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

Impacts associated with the build alternatives are summarized in Table 3, the Corridor Impacts Summary. The potential impacts table includes the environmental, economic, community, and business impacts and the length for each segment. Impacts to wetlands and agricultural lands, estimated number of relocations and construction costs, as well as potential impacts to historical and archaeological resources are shown. A more detailed table of impacts is provided in the DEIS.

In general, through-town alternatives would limit impacts associated with creating a new roadway, but would have increased impacts to communities such as higher numbers of home and business relocations, and higher potential to impact historical sites. Bypass and realignment alternatives typically have fewer impacts to homes and businesses, but typically have increased impacts to agricultural lands and the environment.

Table 2 - Preliminary WisDOT-Recommended Alternative

Segment	WisDOT-Recommended Alternative
Segment I (200th Street to 120th Street)	Deer Lake Far Southern Realignment
Segment II (120th Street to County E)	Apple River/Clover Lake On-Alignment Alternative
Segment III (County E to 50th Street)	Range Southern Realignment
Segment IV (50th Street to 15th Street)	Joel Flowage On-Alignment Alternative
Segment V (15th Street to 5th Street)	Turtle Lake Alternative 4 (Through-Town)
Segment VI (5th Street to Sweeny Pond Creek)	Poskin Southern Realignment
Segment VII (Sweeny Pond Creek to US 53)	Barron Alternative A (Short South Bypass)

3.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Alternatives were developed for the US 8 corridor and subsequently evaluated for how well they address the project's purpose and need. Alternatives that meet the purpose and need criteria are studied in detail throughout the EIS document. Alternatives that do not satisfy the criteria are dismissed. The criteria that the alternatives must address are:

- Addressing Corridors 2020 Plan (Route Importance) and Future Level of Service (LOS)
- Addressing Long-Term Planning and Corridor Preservation
- Reducing Crash Rates in Urban Areas
- Correcting Substandard Roadway Items
- Addressing Legislative Mandate and Public Response

3.1 ALTERNATIVE DESCRIPTIONS

A. Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Strategies are developed to reduce traffic congestion and other environmental effects. The strategies are designed to reduce the number of single occupancy vehicles and emphasize non-motorized or higher occupancy travel modes. TDM comprises all transportation forms. Some TDM strategies include transit, ridesharing and ride matching, walking and bicycling, telecommuting, staggered work schedules, parking management, transportation allowances, high occupancy vehicle facilities/park and ride lots, no-drive days, trip reduction ordinances, and complimentary incentives.

The TDM strategies would not meet the project purpose and need criteria and were not carried through for analysis. TDM strategies would not address the current transportation needs of US 8 and are therefore not considered a viable project alternative. The implementation of TDM strategies is not likely to have much effect on traffic along US 8 and may be difficult to initiate because of limited existing public transportation facilities.

B. No-build Alternative

Under the No-build Alternative, improvements to US 8 would consist primarily of maintenance activities and spot improvements. US 8 would remain a two-lane rural highway from WIS 35 (N) to US 53. Within the Village of Turtle Lake and City of Barron, US 8 would remain as a four-lane undivided roadway. Maintenance activities could include road resurfacing and/or signalization of select intersections.

C. Passing Lane Alternative

The Passing Lane Alternative would add passing lanes along the existing US 8 corridor but would not provide for future corridor preservation or any other improvements outside the locations identified for proposed passing lanes. The US 8 corridor has existing passing lanes in nine locations. Six of the nine passing lanes are located east of WIS 46 (S) and were constructed between 2001–2003. The Passing Lane Alternative proposes six additional passing lane locations be constructed (three eastbound and three westbound). The existing and proposed passing lane locations are shown in Figure 2. As a stand-alone alternative, the Passing Lane Alternative would not meet the capacity and level of service needs, nor would it provide measures for future planning of the 2020 connector route or correct all of the geometric deficiencies along the corridor. The addition of passing lanes is, however, considered as an interim measure under the Four-lane Alternatives.

D. Four-lane Alternatives

The 40-mile corridor was divided into seven segments for study purposes of the Four-lane Alternatives. Some segments have multiple

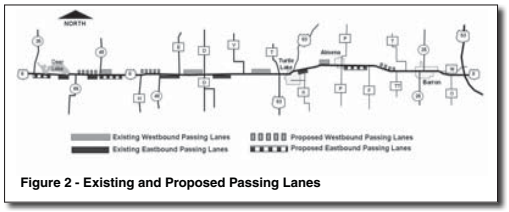


Figure 2 - Existing and Proposed Passing Lanes

alternatives. In four of the seven segments, the alternatives could include the addition of passing lanes as an interim two-lane improvement. The Four-lane Alternatives use corridors that are 400 feet or 600 feet wide. These widths are not the actual right-of-way needed. The corridor widths used reflect the planning nature of the study and provide flexibility to accommodate possible shifts of the preliminary roadway alignment developed as part of the Tier 1 EIS during future, detailed design efforts. The typical rural divided roadway cross section would have two 12-foot lanes in each direction separated by a 60-foot grassed median. The Four-lane Alternatives are further categorized as on-alignment, realignment, bypass, or through-town alternatives based on the predominant location of the proposed US 8 corridor within a particular segment. Key features include:

- On-alignment corridor alternatives are 400 feet wide and typically utilize the current US 8 roadway for one direction of travel and provide an additional two-lane roadway for the opposing direction of travel.
- Realignment corridor alternatives are 400 feet wide and were developed to relocate US 8 around a small community or particular feature and potentially provide local road access via at-grade intersections.
- Bypass corridor alternatives are 600 feet wide and were developed to relocate US 8 around the Village of Turtle Lake and the City of Barron. Access would only be provided at interchanges. A bypass corridor alternative could utilize an interim improvement where two lanes could be constructed on a four-lane facility right-of-way. As traffic increases, and capacity expansion is warranted, additional lanes could be added.
- Through-town corridors are urban alternatives through the Village of Turtle Lake and the City of Barron with corridor widths of 120 feet and 100 feet, respectively.
  - In Turtle Lake, the posted speed limit would be 45 mph. The Turtle Lake through-town cross section includes curb and gutter, a 30-foot raised median to accommodate left turns, 12-foot lanes, 10-foot buffer area, five-foot terrace, and five-foot sidewalk. The 12-foot lanes are used because US 8 is classified as a long truck route.
  - In Barron, the through-town cross section is narrower than Turtle Lake to reduce impacts to buildings close to the existing roadway. With a narrower cross section and less shoulder width, the posted speed limit through Barron would be 35 mph. The Barron through-town cross section includes curb and gutter, a 22-foot raised median to accommodate left turns, inside lanes 11 feet wide and outside lanes 12 feet wide. A six-foot buffer area, five-foot terrace, and five-foot sidewalk completes this cross section.

The Four-lane Alternative study segments and alternative descriptions are outlined in Table 1 and shown on Figures 3 through 9.

Table 1

US 8 Four-lane Alternatives		
Segment	**Segment Limits**	**Segment Alternatives**
I	**200th Street to 120th Street**	Deer Lake On-Alignment Deer Lake Southern Realignment Deer Lake Far Southern Realignment
II	**120th Street to County E**	Apple River/Clover Lake On-Alignment
III	**County E to 50th Street**	Range On-Alignment Range Northern Realignment Range Southern Realignment
IV	**50th Street to 15th Street**	Joel Flowage On-Alignment Joel Flowage Northern Realignment
V	**15th Street to 5th Street**	Turtle Lake Alternative 1 (Short South Bypass) Turtle Lake Alternative 2 (Long South Bypass) Turtle Lake Alternative 3 (Northern Bypass) Turtle Lake Alternative 4 (Through-town)
VI	**5th Street to Sweeny Pond Creek**	Poskin On-Alignment Poskin Southern Realignment
VII	**Sweeny Pond Creek to US 53**	Barron Alternative A (Short South Bypass) Barron Alternative B (Long South Bypass) Barron Alternative C (North Bypass) Barron Alternative D (Through-town)

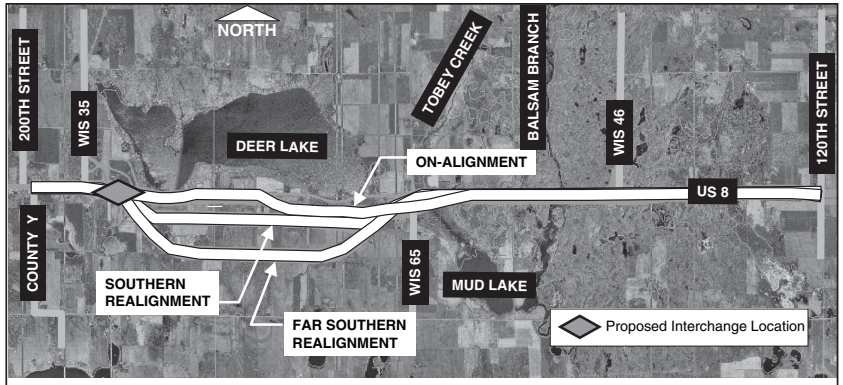


Figure 3, Segment I - 200th Street to 120th Street

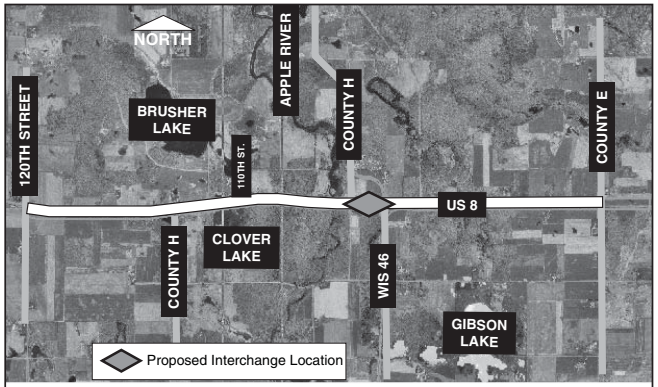


Figure 4, Segment II - 120th Street to County E

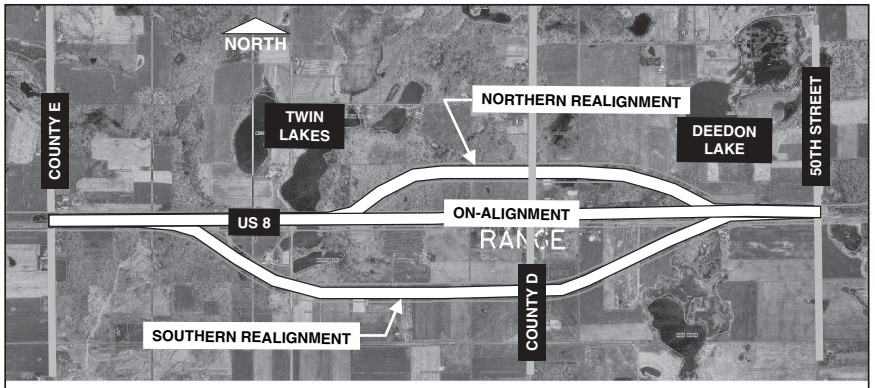


Figure 5, Segment III - County E to 50th Street

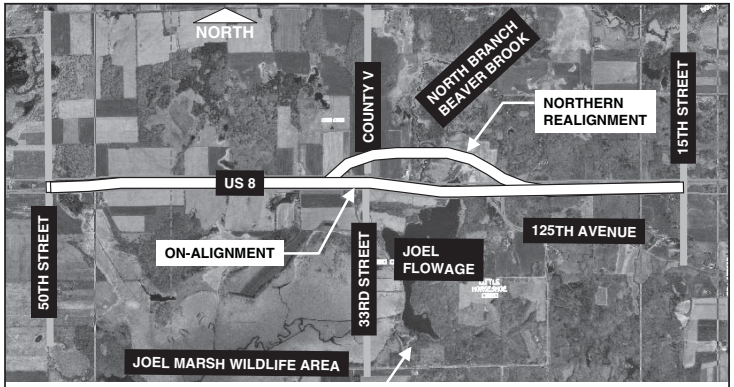


Figure 6, Segment IV - 50th Street to 15th Street

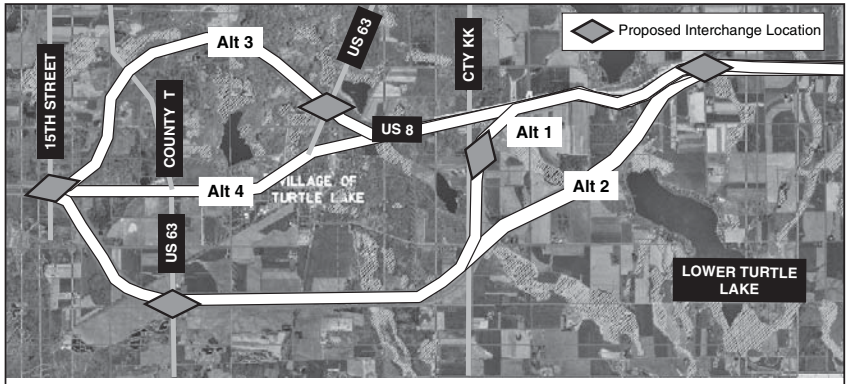


Figure 7, Segment V - 15th Street to 5th Street